

WILD NEWS

Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Nature Program Calendar

April - June 2007

A Symbol of the West Returns

By Jennifer Keyser

The reintroduction of American Bison at the Refuge marks the return of an animal that was once a key component of several ecosystems. Bison formerly covered the western plains, including those of modern-day Colorado. They also inhabited mountain parks, piñon-juniper woodlands, arid shrublands and even alpine tundra. Bison performed vital functions, such as grazing, that along with fire, drove crucial ecological processes on the prairie. Remains of ancient forms of Bison were found on the Refuge in 2000, when bones and teeth dating from the post-Ice Age era were discovered along First Creek.

The American Bison (*Bison bison*) is often called a “buffalo”, which is a misnomer. True buffalo include the Cape Buffalo of Africa and the Water Buffalo of Asia. The Bison’s only living relatives are the Wood Bison (*Bison bison athabasca*), an endangered species found in Canada and the Wisent (*Bison bonasus*), which survives in small numbers in Central and Eastern Europe. Bison are the largest terrestrial animals in North America. Bulls can attain six feet in height and up to twelve and a half feet in length, with a top weight of over 2,000 pounds. Females are smaller, measuring five feet in height and eight feet in length. They can weigh up to 1,000 pounds. Adults of both genders have massive heads with short black horns, shaggy manes, and dark brown coats. Their lifespan in the wild averages 25 years, and up to 40 years in captivity.

Bison bulls reach active breeding age at about three years old. Cows usually mate when they are two and have their first calves when they are three. The gestation period for Bison is between 270 and 280 days after which a single calf (usually) is born in the spring. Newborns are reddish in color and retain this coat until three months of age, when their first coat is replaced by the dark brown one of the adult Bison.

The American Bison was central to several Native American tribes’ way of life. They ate its meat, used skins for clothing and shelter, and made thread and rope from sinew. Hooves and bones provided glue and various tools, while droppings were burned as fuel. Unfortunately, these patterns of Native life were disrupted as Bison were hunted almost to extinction in the late 19th Century.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified wild Bison as a species that plays an important role in the restoration and conservation of prairie habitats throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System and has been successfully managing Bison for more than 100 years. President Theodore Roosevelt established Sullys Hill National Game Preserve in 1904 specifically for Bison conservation. There are now about 200,000 Bison in North America; about 4,200 are in herds on federal lands. The 16 Bison scheduled for a mid-March arrival are part of a pilot project for genetic conservation and to aid with habitat restoration. Refuge staff will study the effects Bison have on the prairie ecosystem to make management decisions and possible future expansion of the herd. The Bison will be located close to the northwest corner of the Refuge on approximately 1440 acres.

Sources:

National Bison Range Website, <http://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/facts.htm>

Colorado Division of Wildlife Website: *Bison and Wild Horses: The Non-Wildlife Wildlife*,
[http://wildlife.state.co.us/Education/TeacherResources/ColoradoWildlifeCompany/
BisonCWCSum1998.htm](http://wildlife.state.co.us/Education/TeacherResources/ColoradoWildlifeCompany/BisonCWCSum1998.htm)

Twenty-Seven Square Miles. Landscape and History at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge,
John Hoffercker, author. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, RMANWR, 2001.

New and Expanded Programs — PLEASE NOTE our Visitor Hours have changed!

Refuge News



Now available to purchase at the
Refuge Visitor Center:

America the Beautiful The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass

Annual Pass: \$80.00

Senior Lifetime Pass (age 62 and
older): \$10.00

*Personal Check, Money Order, or
Cash accepted*

Exciting New Visitor Opportunities Beginning April 1

Visitors will now be able to come and enjoy the Refuge more often and stay longer! The Drop-in Program is expanded to include Tuesdays and Wednesdays in addition to Saturdays and Sundays. For birders, photographers, and early morning nature enthusiasts, the Refuge opens at 6:00 am and closes at 6:00 pm with Visitor Center hours from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Wild Rides, the Refuge's two-hour wildlife public viewing tour, is offered on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 10:00 am by reservation. There are two different tour routes available at scheduled times for visitors to view and photograph wildlife, from burrowing owls to bison.

Hikers and anglers can access the Refuge's largest body of water, Lake Ladora, from all sides with the opening of more trail along the northern and eastern shoreline. This area is very scenic and provides the perfect backdrop for hayrides or a quiet walk.

A special monthly program has been added called "Tuesday Tots" for young children to explore nature through stories, crafts, and other fun learning activities. Also, short interpretive Ranger Talks will be offered on various topics.

Call for more information. 303-289-0930

WILD TREKS PROGRAM

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays

Refuge Hours: 6:00 am – 6:00 pm

Visitor Center Hours: 7:30 am – 4:00 pm

WILD RIDES

Wednesdays and Saturdays

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

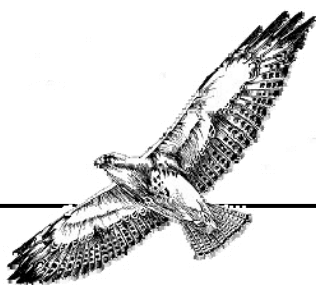
TOURS EN ESPAÑOL EN EL REFUGIO

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MOBILE PHOTO BLIND SESSIONS

Saturdays and Sundays

8:00 am - 12:00 pm & 12:00 - 4:00 pm



Nature Programs

April - June 2007

*Reservations are required for these
FREE popular programs. Space is
limited. Call 303-289-0930 to register.
Please dress for the weather. All
children must be accompanied by an
adult. Assistance dogs are welcome.
Refuge staff reserves the right to cancel
or reschedule programs due to
unforeseen circumstances.*

APRIL

Evening Under the Stars

Sunday April 1

6:00 - 8:30 pm

Join the Denver Astronomical Society for this unique opportunity to learn about the cosmos while star gazing under the Refuge sky. Program sponsored by The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society.

Tuesday Tots

Tuesday April 3
10:00 - 11:00 am

Teach your kids to love nature! Offered the first Tuesday of each month, these hour long programs use nature to stimulate senses, develop positive attitudes and encourage learning through games, songs, crafts, stories, hikes and catching critters. It's a different adventure every month full of creative activities! Child must be 2 to 5 years old and accompanied by a caregiver over 18.

Home on the Range

Saturday April 14
Sunday April 15
1:00 - 3:00 pm

Come and meet the newest Refuge residents – the great American Bison. Discover interesting facts and learn about the history of North America's largest land mammal.

Kids Photo Basics

Sunday April 29
1:00 - 3:00 pm

Kids! Join in this hands-on Refuge exploration to learn what's *cool* with wildlife photography.

MAY

Tuesday Tots

Tuesday May 1
10:00 - 11:00 am

Please see April 3 for description.

Dawn Chorus

Saturday May 5
6:30 - 10:30 am

Bring your binoculars, field guides and even your camera for this early morning spring birding expedition as the sun peaks over the horizon and birds everywhere erupt into song.



Peek at the Past

Saturday May 5
1:00 - 1:30 pm

Sunday May 6 10:00 - 10:30 am
Join a Park Ranger for this brief informative talk about the last remaining farmhouse on the Refuge, and the family who lived there.

Bike the Refuge

Sunday May 6
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Here's a unique opportunity to pedal your way around the Refuge on this guided tour. This nature program is intended for experienced, adult riders. Don't forget water and puncture-proof tires. Helmets are required.

Fishing Fever

Saturday May 12
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Please see description on back page.

Mother's Day Hayride

Sunday May 13
1:30 - 4:00 pm

Kids of all ages — bring your mom and enjoy the afternoon experiencing the sights and sounds of the Refuge on this slow, easy hayride. Create a keepsake memento to give to mom.

Family Bike the Refuge

Saturday May 26
1:00 - 3:00 pm

Take the family on a naturalist led, leisurely bike ride past prairie dog towns, lakes and woodlands. We'll stop and talk about the wonderful wildlife we see along the way. Water and puncture-proof tires recommended. Helmets are required.

JUNE

Tuesday Tots

Tuesday June 5
10:00 - 11:00 am

Please see April 3 for description.



Prairie Blooms

Saturday June 9
9:00 - 11:00 am

During the spring, wildflowers create a vivid landscape of color. Join us for this leisurely guided hike to see these magnificent native blooms.



"Home is Habitat" Teacher Training

Friday June 15
8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Teachers, take a walk on the wild side! Learn how to use the "Home is Habitat" curriculum to lead your own Refuge field trips. This training will teach you how to customize each field trip to your classroom studies by selecting from several different indoor and outdoor activities. Re-certification credit available through the Colorado School of Mines. To register, call 303-289-0931.

Owls Underground

Saturday June 16
8:00 - 10:00 am
10:00 - 12:00 pm

Burrowing owl chicks are a must see this summer! Join a Refuge Biologist on this field exploration and learn about these small, spindly-legged owls that make their home in vacant prairie dog burrows.

Father's Day Fishing

Sunday June 17
2:00 - 5:30 pm

Is there a better gift than letting Dad fish on Father's Day? The kids will make a special Father's Day card while dad learns new tips and tricks from our experienced volunteers. Refreshments provided by The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society.

— PLEASE NOTE —

The Refuge will close at 2 pm on Saturday, June 30th. Our apologies for the inconvenience.

Fishing News Go Fish!

The Refuge Public Fishing Season is Here!

Beginning April 15 through October 14, catch-and-release fishing will be offered at the Refuge lakes every Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday from 6:00 am - 5:30 pm. A recreational fishing fee of \$3.00 per person is required along with a State of Colorado Fishing License for anglers 16 years and older. Anglers must attend a yearly one-time orientation before fishing. Starting April 1, the 15 minute orientation will be offered every Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday at 8:00 am in the Visitor Center. Please check our website for additional rules and regulations.

Pre-season Fishing Orientations

Get ahead of the crowd and complete your yearly fishing orientation before the season starts. Orientations will be offered at Bass Pro Shops (7970 E 49th Ave) on the following dates:

*Tuesday April 3 and Thursday April 5
6:00, 6:30, 7:00 and 7:30 pm*

Special Free Fishing Days

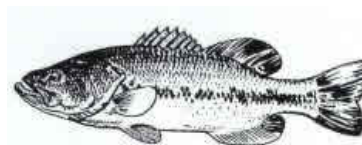
- ▶ Saturday May 12 Fishing Fever Special Event
- ▶ Saturday June 2 National Trails and Fishing Week

Fishing Fever - Get Hooked on Fishing!

Spend quality family time fishing on the Refuge lakes during our third-annual FREE special family event! Bring your own equipment or borrow ours for this fun-filled day of activities and catch-and-release fishing. To fish you must use barbless hooks, artificial flies or lures. No live bait is allowed at the Refuge. Anglers 16 years of age and older must have a Colorado Fishing License.

Special Activities

- ▶ 6:00 am - 5:30 pm FREE catch-and-release fishing
- ▶ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm Wildlife Viewing Tour
(reservations required, call 303-289-0930)
- ▶ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Booths and displays including
 - Kids fishing derby
 - Small fry activities
 - How to fish and cast



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
Commerce City, CO 80022-1748

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Fees Paid
U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service
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DIRECTIONS TO THE REFUGE:

*Enter the Refuge at 56th Avenue and
Havana Street. Proceed 1.5 miles to the
Visitor Center to check-in.*



Visit our website at www.fws.gov/rockymountainarsenal or call 303-289-0930

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